

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-18

NEW YORK TIMES
17 APRIL 1980

INDEPENDENT CENSOR IS OPPOSED BY C.I.A.

Official Says Board From Outside
Agencies to Monitor Writings
Would Not Be Practical

By CHARLES MOHR

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 16 — Officials of the nation's intelligence services expressed general opposition today to a proposal that an independent board be created to review disputes about what information former intelligence agents should be permitted to publish in books and articles.

Representative Les Aspin, Democrat of Wisconsin, chairman of the oversight Subcommittee of the House Intelligence Committee, recently proposed creating such a board. He said the question had become more important since the United States Supreme Court ruled that secrecy agreements in which employees of the Central Intelligence Agency promise to submit any writings for pre-publication review are valid contracts.

The Court ordered a former agency analyst, Frank Snepp, to surrender all of his earnings from his book "Decent Interval," which accused some United States officials of blunders and cynical abandonment of obligations to Vietnamese in the period leading up to the fall of South Vietnam in 1975.

At a subcommittee hearing today Mr. Aspin told a panel of middle-level officials from four intelligence agencies that prepublication review programs would seem "arbitrary" and unfair if an agent-turned-author could appeal only to his agency's top official. The system might appear to be applied only to critics of the intelligence agencies, not to supporters of official policy and agency performance, he suggested.

However, the officials clearly indicated that they saw practical problems in permitting an independent board of officials from other agencies to review questions of whether material about the intelligence services could be safely published.

Ernest Mayerfeld, deputy general counsel to the Central Intelligence Agency, said intelligence was a "somewhat arcane business, a skill, a craft" that would be difficult "for someone else to make determinations about."

Legal and security experts from the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice took similar positions.

Mr. Mayerfeld testified that the number of "items," including speeches, articles and book manuscripts, submitted for pre-publication review by present and former C.I.A. employees, had increased from 42 in 1977 to 94 in 1979. There were 47 items in the first four months of 1980.

The official added that most submissions were approved, but in 1979, for instance, the C.I.A. publication board ordered some change in 16 items submitted by former employees and disapproved of one item entirely.